Firstly I would like to acknowledge and pay my respects to the traditional owners, the wiradjuri nation, and to the elders past and present.

To Mr Brian Kennelly, headmaster of Kinross Wolaroi, to the chair of council, Mr Tony Cheney and council members, other distinguished guests, school staff, parents and students. It is an honour to be here today and thanks very much for the invitation, to be the guest speaker. I am not sure who is secretly cheering louder on the inside seeing this is the last official day of school, the students, school staff, or the parents?

First of all congratulations to all the students present here today, for completing another year of school. For the education we receive here today in this country, we need to be so thankful for, because there are so many young people your own age in war torn countries like Afghanistan, the Sudan, the Congo and Ethiopia, or the slums in India that may not get the opportunity to receive an education or to sit in front of a computer.

In some countries, because you are a girl, you may not be entitled to an education at all.

What would our lives be like if we changed places? What would our goals be like? Our aspirations? What can we look forward to in the future?

To the students present I’d like you to think back over this year and remember why you are here at school in the first place? Are you contributing to your own education by being involved in class? By participating? By being challenged by the subject matter and also the teachers?

To the teachers of the junior school, middle school, senior school, the ancillary staff, and the administrative staff I congratulate you each individually because you are the people that are committed to educating our future leaders of industries, of business, of sport, of the arts, of politics and the future teachers and principals that will follow in your footsteps. I’m sure there are moments when teaching may feel like a thankless task, but sometimes you just need to know in your heart that your 100% effort, and at times your 150% effort, will be what makes the difference to a child’s life in the long run.

To the world you might be one person. But to that one person you may mean the world.

To the students I want you to look around at your teachers because the value of your education is characterised by the relationship you have with these key people in your lives right now.

Mr Kennelly and I spoke about a theme for today and what message do I give to you as students so you don’t fall asleep. “be the change that you want to see in the world” that quote from mahatma Gandhi is famous knowing full well that you can personally contribute to the change that you want to see within your home, your school, your community, or your town of Deniliquin, Moree, lightning ridge, wellington, orange, scone or Tamworth here in NSW.

It is contributing within your classroom, it is being a helping hand to other students, your family, it is lending a stranger a hand when they need it.
It is being accountable and responsible for your behaviour, it is being the best person that you can be with your own skills, abilities and gifts but the change I believe, as I read this quote is the change, that lies within you personally.

Your values, beliefs and lifelong lessons of resilience, self-belief, confidence and personal pride, that you have learnt from your parents, grandparents, families and extended families are going to be the transferrable skills that will serve you well each and every day.

**What change do you want? How are you going to do it? Who is going to help you? Are you willing to follow through and stand true to your dreams and goals and hang in there when times get tough.**

**Tough times don't last only tough people do and you can either stand for something or fall for anything.**

What do you stand for? What will people remember you for?

One piece of advice I would like to pass on to you is this; **“the definition of the best job is doing something that you love and getting paid to do it.**

It is finding a purpose in your life that you are passionate about and believing in your skills and abilities and having the courage that you can follow through and make a difference in whatever field, you wish to pursue.

After leaving school I had worked for a number of government departments, started my own business in 2000, and then established our not for profit company Yalari in 2005. It was then at the age of 38 that I found the purpose in my life.

Through Yalari I can help my indigenous people in this country by providing educational opportunities for children to attend their senior schooling at some of the best boarding schools throughout Australia.

We have 176 children on scholarships in 33 boarding schools throughout Australia. I found the change that I wanted to see in my world by providing indigenous children from regional, rural and remote communities to have the same educational opportunity that I received myself as a boarder at Toowoomba grammar school, from 1980 -1984.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the broader Kinross Wolaroi school community, teaching staff and boarding staff for supporting our six young ladies on Yalari scholarships here; Ashley, Lara, Larae, Kalina, Mickayla and Kaleisha, and for all of the indigenous children enrolled at the school. Your support is invaluable in bringing about a better present but a brighter future through the empowerment of education.

Students, each and every day you are challenged physically, spiritually, mentally, emotionally, financially and socially but these challenges can be used as stepping stones and not stumbling blocks to prepare you for the person you want to become, the dreams you want to achieve and the contribution you will make in the future.

**I remind you that the only difference between you and your grandparents and great grandparents is the access to educational opportunities.**
My great grandmother Nellie Thomas, who died at the age of 106, was born under a tree near Barcaldine, in central QLD. She didn’t go to school and couldn’t read or write. She signed her signature with a thumb print but knew the bible intimately. My mother and father were born in Cherbourg, an aboriginal community near Kingaroy, 3 hours North West of Brisbane. Mum, finished her schooling in grade 5 and dad in year 8. In my case I am the eldest of 7 children and we all finished year 12.

For some of you, finishing grade 12 means that you are the first person in your family to finish high school and maybe the first to go off to study at university. I congratulate you on this. Access to quality education is the key that will open the door to a world full of opportunities. Congratulations to each and every one of you for receiving academic, sporting and special awards today. Your commitment to your studies is being rewarded.

To the students who have not walked across the stage today you are also winners in your own right. I remind you that the only time success comes before work is in the dictionary. The good news is your future is in our hands and the bad news the future is also in your hands.

I wish you all the very best for your studies in 2013, in your pursuit of the dreams and goals that you are passionate about, fulfil the purpose that you find, have the courage to stand by your beliefs and remain strong to your values. In the words of my hero, nelson Mandela, “education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world” thanks very much.

Waverley Stanley
Founding Director
Yalari